

Study Reviews Pollution By Kennecott

Continued From B-1
PM10 problem.

Environmentalists have tried to convince Kennecott to install the acid plant for more than 15 years. They contend the copper company should be reducing its pollution, not injecting it high into the air. But Kennecott officials have been reluctant to install the expensive equipment, preferring instead to use less costly methods to control air pollution.

Air quality officials have long wondered whether pollution from Kennecott's smokestack contributes to the PM10 problems in Salt Lake and Utah counties, but they have been unable to determine the origin of the numerous sulfate particles they collected in air samples.

This problem was solved last winter when Kennecott agreed to inject two different "tracer gases" into the industrial gases released by the smelter. One type of tracer was injected into the gases leaving the smokestack, another into gases leaving vents in the smelter building. Both gases were detected at special monitors in the urban and residential portions of Salt Lake and Utah counties.

While the study establishes a clear link between emissions from Kennecott's smelter and Wasatch Front air pollution, there's considerable debate over the amount of pollution which can be attributed to Kennecott.

Kennecott was emitting 3,833 pounds of sulfur dioxide per hour from its smokestack during the tracer study. The preliminary data indicate this resulted in one microgram per cubic meter of PM10 at the air monitoring center in downtown Salt Lake City.

Kennecott officials argue that one microgram is insignificant. They note that the air in Salt Lake City occasionally contains 175 micrograms of PM10 during stagnant periods. The federal standard for PM10 is 150 micrograms. Concentrations above 150 micrograms are considered unhealthy for "sensitive" individuals, such as people with asthma.

Mr. Cordner said the tracer study may be misleading because Kennecott was releasing abnormally low levels of sulfur dioxide during the test.

0013

State Forecast

A strong high pressure cell will bring a mix of sun and clouds through Tuesday.

8100

New Study: How Does Kennecott Pollution Stack Up?

m/15/02

By Jim Woolf
Tribune Staff Writer

The concept was simple: Build one of the tallest smokestacks in North America and let industrial pollution disperse into the clean air above the smog which blankets Salt Lake County during the winter.

This was Kennecott Copper Corporation's reasoning when it built the 1,200-foot-tall smokestack at its Magna smelter. And it worked. Air quality in Salt Lake County improved dramatically when the new smokestack went into service on Memorial Day in 1978.

But the preliminary results of a new study indicate the solution isn't perfect. While most of the pollution released above the smog layer blows somewhere else, some returns to ground level in Salt Lake and Utah counties.

Burnell Cordiner, director of the Utah Bureau of Air Quality, said the new data indicates Kennecott is "probably having a significant impact" on Wasatch Front air pollution during stagnant periods in the winter.

"It is a minor contribution," countered R. K. Davey, vice president and general manager of the company, which is now called Kennecott Utah Copper. "We don't agree with the state's position."

State officials feel confident

enough in their opinion that they are reconsidering a proposal to require Kennecott to install a "double contact acid plant" to reduce sulfur dioxide emissions from the smelter. A decision on whether to mandate the acid plant will be made in July or August.

Mr. Cordiner said he has been told the acid plant would cost Kennecott approximately \$100 million. Mr. Davey refused to provide a cost estimate for *The Tribune*, explaining: "We won't enter that part of the discussion at this stage."

Kennecott officials failed to respond to several requests from *The Tribune* for information on the amount of sulfur dioxide they are removing from their stack gases and how much more could be removed if the acid plant were installed.

The possibility of the acid plant was raised June 15 when the state released its preliminary plan for cleaning up a type of air pollution known as PM10 — particulate matter measuring less than 10 microns in diameter. These tiny particles of soot and dust can become lodged in the lungs and cause respiratory problems.

The sulfur dioxide gas emitted

from Kennecott's smelter undergoes

a chemical transformation in the atmosphere to become tiny "sulfate"

particles which contribute to the

See B-2, Column 1

—Tribune Staff Photo by Rick Egan
smokestack in Magna returns to ground levels in Salt Lake and Utah counties

Preliminary results from new study indicate some pollution from Kennecott's

